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# Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 (MSS 239)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
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Kentucky Library & Museum  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 239     RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986**

5 boxes. 24 folders. 463 items. 1890-1995

2008.241.42-48

***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE***

Laura Elizabeth Ferguson was born 2 September 1908 in Learned, Hinds County, Mississippi. After she graduated from Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, she married William Edwin Richardson, also a Mississippi native, in 1933 and moved with him to Louisville, Kentucky where he completed his doctor of philosophy degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Richardson began quilting while her husband was serving small churches in rural Kentucky. Quilting parties were the community social events for women and, as the minister's wife, she wanted to take part. She later began to do research on the history of quilt making and its development into an American folk art form. She purchased the first quilt for her collection in 1940 in Maury County, Tennessee where her husband was a minister. Richardson spent most of her married life in Tennessee and Kentucky where her husband pastored churches and eventually became involved in higher education. He was president of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, and Bethel College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and was on the faculty of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Richardson also served on the staff of Bethel College teaching art appreciation and running the dining room for the students that lived on campus. Wherever she was living, Richardson continued to study, collect, and make quilts. She gave lectures, talks and interviews to share her knowledge and achieved a regional reputation as a collector and a quilter. She maintained a lengthy correspondence with noted quilt experts and authors Florence Peto of New Jersey and Dr. W. R. Dunton of Maryland. Peto often advised Richardson on purchases for her collection and the two women exchanged diagrams of patterns and swatches of material.

The Richardsons had two daughters, Jane, who was born in 1935 and died in 2004, and June, born 1937. Elizabeth Richardson, who had been a widow for fifteen years, died 3 March 1986 in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

## ***COLLECTION***

This collection reflects Elizabeth Richardson's almost 50 year involvement with quilts, quilting, and quilters. The bulk of the collection consists of letters to Richardson from noted quilt authorities Florence Peto and Dr. William Rush Dunton. The letters from Peto, 1939 to 1950, reveal the women's shared enthusiasm and growing friendship. In addition to the exchange of purely "quilt" information, Peto offers details about her home, family, and travels. Many of the letters had fabric samples attached that have been preserved in acid-free Mylar sleeves. They have not been numbered individually as no ink has been applied to the fabrics. There are fewer letters from Dunton; however, the collection includes many of his research notes, pattern diagrams, and quilt photographs. Also featured are six scrapbooks kept by Richardson that contain pictures and articles from newspapers and magazines related to quilts and textiles. Additionally, there are eleven display boards covered with fabric swatches that she probably utilized while giving her lectures.

## ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>		<b>1890-1995</b>	<b>322 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Letters from Florence Peto	1939-1940	17 items
Folder 3	Letters from Florence Peto	1941-1942	41 items
Folder 4	Letters from Florence Peto	1943-1945	36 items
Folder 5	Letters from Florence Peto	1946-1947	31 items
Folder 6	Letters from Florence Peto	1948	17 items
Folder 7	Letters from Florence Peto	1949	29 items
Folder 8	Letters from Florence Peto	1950	30 items
Folder 9	Letters from Florence Peto	1951	40 items
Folder 10	Letters from Florence Peto	1952	39 items
Folder 11	Miscellaneous	1890-1995	36 items
Folder 12	Wallpaper samples	n.d.	5 items
C1-D15			
F3			

<b>Box 2</b>		<b>1939-1951</b>	<b>124 items</b>
Folder 1	Letters from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr.	1939-1951	48 items
Folder 2	Dr. Dunton's Quilt Dictionary - letter "K" only	n.d.	1 item
Folder 3	Miscellaneous notes of Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr.	n.d.	11 items
Folder 4	Quilt photographs from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr. with notes attached	n.d.	15 items
Folder 5	Quilt photographs from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr. – no documents attached	n.d.	49 items
<b>Box 3</b>			<b>13 items</b>
Folder 1	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item
Folder 3	Display boards with fabric swatches	n.d.	11 items
<b>Box 4</b>			<b>2 items</b>
Folder 1	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item
<b>Box 5</b>			<b>2 items</b>
Folder 1	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Scrapbook	n.d.	1 item

## **CATALOG CARD**

MSS RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth 1890-1995  
239 (Ferguson), 1908-1986

Letters, photographs and scrapbooks  
belonging to quilt collector Richardson. Includes letters  
and research materials from noted authorities Florence  
Peto and William Rush Dunton.

5 boxes. 24 folders. 463 items  
2008.241.42-48 K/18

## **SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Christmas cards B1  
Dunton, William Rush, 1868-1966 B2  
Dunton, William Rush, 1868-1966 – Relating to B1,F11  
Peto, Florence, 1884-1970 B1  
Peto, Marjorie, 1904-1969 – Relating to B1  
Quilts and quilting  
Quilts and quilting – Photos B1,F5; B2,F4&5  
Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 – Letter from, 15 June 1942 B1,F3  
Richardson, William Edwin, 1900-1971 – Relating to B1,F11  
Scrapbooks – Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 B3-5  
Stenge, Bertha, 1891-1957 – Relating to B1  
Textiles

## **CHRONOLOGICAL CARDS**

1890  
1939-1950  
1951-1960  
1995

sl - 1; me - 1; sa - 12; chrono - 4

Lile/Jeffrey 01/29/2009